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THOMAS RODNEY.

BY SIMON GRATZ, ESQ.

(Continued from page 189.)

*Thomas Rodney to Cæsar A. Rodney.*Town of Washington M. T. Jan^y. 4th 1806.

My dear Son,

We had a busy scene at the Land office the two last weeks in December; The Preemption Claimants were paying their first Instalment about two thirds of them paid up; the other third could not raise the Money—Congress Indeed fixed on an Improper time for this Country it was before they could git their Crops to Market—If the first of April Instead of the first of Jan^y. had been fixed there would have been but few deficient; but as it was, some could not git any part of their money, others came with half, or two thirds, but nothing less than the whole could be received, so that they had to return home many of them in great dread & distress for fear of Losing their Land and Improvements—But I trust Congress will have Justice and Humanity Enough to give them a further day of payment—Sure I am it will be Injurious to this Country not to do so—I purchased some time ago a small Lot in this town which is to be my Clover Lot. I have also purchased a Lot of 26 acres at the Walnut hills, Including the highest hill near that Place (It is said to be 200, feet higher than any other Land there, and affords a Prospect of the River and the whole Country round) with a road from thence down to the Great Fishing Lake where the trout, Barr-fish or Rock, and soft shell Turtle, also large fresh-water Lobsters, are very plenty—any quantity of Trout may be taken with the Hook & line, hundreds may be caught in a few hours—some

weighing 6^{lbs} These are Excellent Fish and the Barfish are Equal to the Pond Rock—Large Sunfish are also plenty there. Adjacent to this Lot I have purchased a tract of 370, acres, the Chief growth on which is Cane, walnut & Poplar, and the Dark soil is said to be five feet Deep all over it; yet it is highland with one Spring on it, nearly sufficient to turn a mill. Those who live there say it is worth ten dol^s per acre at this time—The Latter tract was a Preemption Claim which the Claimant not being able or willing to pay for, transferred to me as a Present and I paid the Instalment and shall go up there this winter to fix a Tenant upon it—to Improve it—The Yazoo Enters the Misisipi a few Miles above the Walnut Hills, and there is a Byo out of the Great Fishing Lake into it—There is Vacant Land all round mine, Except on one End also back to the Indian line; and all of it Very rich—all our Society here of Officers, mean to purchase up there as far as our Money will Enable us—and as soon as the office is open for the Sale of Vacant Land that part will be settled—and when we get the Indian Country above to the Tennessee line the Walnut hills will be the seat of Government for this Territory they being about Midway on the River &c.—The story of Burr grows more feeble It was not true that he was at Nashville on the 18th of last month—Nor have we heard from Gen^l. Wilkinson since I wrote by last mail—The Project that Lumed so large lately begins generally to be viewed with Contempt in the West—but however It may turn out at last, there must be an Eclarcesement between Burr and Wilkinson—This will probably reveal the project whatever it was—The two last mails are due from the Federal City—We have got nothing from there later than the 17th of Nov.^r tho we Expected the Presidents Message by the Mail before last—My barrel of grass Seeds &c. got home last week—

On New Years day I left my office in which I have

lodged for near two years past and moved to a genteel Boarding House just set up by the widow of a young officer who lately Died at Nachitachez—M^r. Shields and M^r. Grayson Clerk of the Supreme Court Board at the same House and all the rest of our young officers will probably soon follow us, as they have to be where I am. but when the Board rises—I shall move out of Town where Boarding is much Cheaper—Col. Ellis, Col. Ozmun, Col. Claibourne, have each solicited me to live with them and each of them have offered me a room &c.&c. I probably prefer Col. Ellis's because only a mile from town & M^{rs}. Ellis is a very fine woman so indeed is M^{rs}. Claiborne, Col. Ozmun is not Married—Several others have made like offers but who live too distant from the Seat of business.

Thomas Rodney.

Thomas Rodney to Cæsar A. Rodney.

M. T. Town of Washington Jan^y. 21st. 1806.

My dear Son,

Two mails from the Eastward of Nashville are due here now we have received nothing since the Presidents Message to Congress, so that we Know not yet what the sense of Congress is respecting our business with Spain—The Chief anxiety here is on that subject—It is the only one that can much Interest this part of the Country Except as to Land Claims, and this is but a minor subject at Congress—Since the Courts have been over I have been close at the Board and the further we advance in the business the more inappropriate we find the Land Law. It is indeed one of the most Cruid and inappropriate Laws that ever was applied to so important a Subject—The Expense and Difficulties it occasions are great and will in the End when the Board has done the best in their power be Injurious to many in the first Instance and leave many others subject to Law Suits, great Expense and Ultimately Loss of their

property and Labor &c. and as all the Claims are to be surveyed, and all the Country beside to be laid out in Townships and Sections the Surveying will Cost @ 4 dollars a mile, a vast sum of money—This gingerbread Kind of Nicety Costs U. S. unnecessarily a great deal of money when the Country would have been quicker settled and more Contentedly without any of that Expense. If they had opened a Land Office at once and sold of the Vacant Lands as applied for and Left all old titles to have been Settled by Law as they must ultimately be as it is—So that the Present plan is not only Expensive but will produce great Injury—Yet it seems it is to Extend to all parts of the Western Country—But the best way would be to open their Land offices at once and leave it to the applicants or purchasers to find out the Vacant Land they Chose to apply for and leave the Risk on themselves—Then the Vacant Lands would produce great profit to the United States with little Expense—The Government can have no Idea of the trouble and Difficulties we have had in the business here till our works are Returned to them—It is a business Indeed that has worried out the People as well as the Commissioners—They are in fact so tired of it that they have grown Indifferent about bringing in their Title papers or Testimony—which greatly Impedes our progress—I continue in good health and it is generally healthy here—Doct^r. Jo. M^cCrery has set off to Orleans to go round by sea to Delaware—And^r. his brother is Married and Lives in Natchez—Shields continues well and his practice is increasing; Give my love to Susan and the Children. The pamphlets you promised have not reached me yet.

Your affectionate father

Thomas Rodney.

P. S. we had an account last week of a great firing and and Cannonade at Mobile by a gentleman from South Carolina who Came the Sea road, but the Mail from

Tombigbee arrived since and bro^t. no account of it—so that it is not now Credited—but it was Conjectured at first that the Brittish or some of our armed Vessels had attacked the Spanish Fort there; in which there is only 240 or 50 men—most of the Settlers of West Florida are Americans so that when attacked it will be Easily taken, but as yet all is quiet between this and Orleans.

Thomas Rodney to Cæsar A. Rodney.

Town of Washington Misisipi Territory
April 8th 1806.

My dear Son,

By last mail I transmitted to you a draft on the Treasury of the U. States for 500, dol^s. and now inclose for you a Duplicate of that draft—we have nothing from the Westward since my last letter and Everything now from the Gen^l. Government argues only Peace and Negociation with Spain. I suppose this is on the Merchantile Principle of purchasing what we have hitherto Claimed This Principle tends to Confirm all those vast Speculations and Grants made by the Spaniards between the Cession to France & that to the U. S.

There seems Little doubt that, Most if not all the Lands included in the Ceded Country of any Value were granted previous to the Cession to the U. S. to the favorites of the Spanish Officers—or those who would give them most money. It appears to me it would be better to leave our Claims undetermined till we could make good than to Confirm all those Speculations by purchase which would be acknowledging the Spanish title.

I Continue in my usual health, and after this week shall be on the Circuit for 4 weeks In which I shall be Alone Judge Matthew being removed to Orleans & Judge Bruin seldom attends the Court, being great part of his time unable to ride abroad.

Y^r. affectⁿ. father
Thomas Rodney

N. B. one hundred Dollars out of the five hundred are to be paid by you to John Fisher Esq^r., Dover—

Thomas Rodney to Cæsar A. Rodney.

M. T. Town of Washington April 30th 1806

My dear Son,

Mr. Williams the Gov^r. has gone to N. C. for his family, and our new Secretary has not arrived yet, and my new Colleague Judge Matthews is Removed to Orleans so that I have to Ride the Circuit alone and have to Set off to the hights to Morrow—all is Peace and quiet in the west, nothing is Expected now in this quarter but another purchase.

My draft rejected by Gallatin was returned yesterday with an addition of 108. Dol^s. Costs and Charges—If he deals with all the other officers of Government as he does with those in this quart^r. he must allways have a vast Sum of their money in his hands for speculation—For speculation seems to be the order of the day—and I fear the P. is surrounded and Imbarrassed by those Kinds of Gentry—but things will have their Course. The field is wide and overuling Circumstances will prevail I continue to Enjoy my usual health—give my love to Susan & the Children—I have not heard from any of my friends for a Month past or more past—

Your affect^d. father

Thomas Rodney.

P. S. a very Unfortunate Circumstance happened here while I was at Court A quarrel happened at the Post office between the Post Rider and the Postmaster. Mr. Winston the Governors brother in Law, and the Rider being very Insolent Winston struck him with a whip whereupon the Rider Instantly stabled him with a long Knife—It was at first thought mortal but he is now Recovering—The Rider was Siezed and sent to the Court & was immediately Indicated & tried, Convicted and sentenced to six months Imprisonment.

T. R.

Thomas Rodney to Cæsar A. Rodney.

M. T. Town of Washington May 14th 1806.

My dear Son,

On my return from the Circuit Court at the hights held for the County of Wilkinson I received your Letter of the 6th Ult. and am greatly pleased to hear your family and Fisher's are well and that your business is beginning to flow again and I am well Pleased to hear that Doct^r. Ham has Escaped so well out of the hands of his Persecutors—The Doct^r. is an Earnest and active Partizan but he Informs me he is werey of his Situation and means to move to the New Country some where—I am glad to hear that Doct^r. M^cCrery has arrived safe—as the Doct^r. has been long in this Country he can give you a full and satisfactory account of it—he promised to write to me soon after his arrival but I have not heard from him yet—his brother and Scipe seem to have the great run of practice since he left here tho I cannot say it has been sickly. Yet I fear it will be on account of the Misisipi not over flowing its banks this Season, a Circumstance never Remembered before by the oldest Inhabitant of this Country and in Countries annually overflown it is apt to be sickly when they happen not to be so, yet I never Enjoyed better health and Indeed it is generally healthy about Washington. I had to traverse the last Circuit alone, Judge Matthews being transferred to Orleans and Judge Bruin not being able to turn out—but I had a pleasant time below. We got Plenty of fine Fish and soft shell Turtle—We have three Kinds of very fine Fish, trout barfish & gaspergoo—The trout is hardly inferior to those of Delaware—the barfish are much like our finest Perch or rather between Rock and Perch and the soft shell Turtles is hardly inferior to our terrapins—but it is seldom these kinds of fish fall in my way so that I had rare Feasting at Captⁿ. Collins's and Col. Ellis's—and now the Col.

is in mind I must mention to you that he wants Harness for four Horses with his Coach, and a proper Coach whip for the Driver, and Indeed If you Could procure a good Driver to come he would have a fine berth with the Colonel—I write thus Expecting you have Received a former Letter on this Subject but will now mention again that I wrote to Webb at Wilmington to make the Col. a Coach, to be made of the best Materials, with Plated Harness and the whole to be Finished off in the most Elegant and fashionable manner but have never heard from him on this Subject—and have since wrote to you to attend to it and If he could not make it to get such an one made for the Colonel in Philad^a.—and sent round by way of Orleans—and he has bought his Horses and Expects it round this Fall—The money for it will be Transmitted at any time when Requested—The Colonel is one of our most wealthy Citizens—his Cotton Crop generally sells for ten thousand Dollars a year—I have a request too for Susan to Execute—The Inhabitants here are Extremely bad off for Female Schools—and M^r. A. Green one of our wealthy Planters who has six or seven Little daughters to Educate, desired me to Endeavor to procure a Female Mistress, Capable of teaching them, from Philad^a. if Possible—That If such an one Can be had, If a Single Woman, he will board her in his own House (which is one of the best in the Territory) and will give her five hundred Dollars a year and allow her to teach as many more Young Ladies as would be reasonable for her to take—Indeed an accomplished Lady well Calculated to Keep a boarding School, and of teaching young Ladies is in very great demand here—if such an one can be Induced to come, there is no doubt of her success, and I am sure there must be plenty of such in Philad^a. but she must be Competent to teach Reading writing & cyphering as well as Needlework—A Drawing Master also would find full Employment here—The Planters are Rich, have

large Families, and are Very desirous of Educating their Children in the best Manner—

Our Land business goes on slowly we are obliged to wait for the Surveyors but I hope we shall finish by December at farthest—Gov^r. Williams, has gone to N. Carolina for his family—and there is only the Register and myself left but we can go on with it and after the Supreme Court is over I shall have Nothing Else to do till the Fall, only out door Court business. The draft Gallatin Protested was returned to me with \$108, cost and Charges on it—This is a new Economical way of paying Public Compensation for Services—It looks to me more like Swindling—and such Conduct must in the End greatly Imbarrass Government. The President is unfortunate too, or is very much Imposed on in his appointments in the west An agent and one of the Commissioners appointed on the other side the River (where all appointments ought to be particularly discreet) are said to be mere Sots and unfit for any such business—His Gov^{rs}. too have been greatly Complained off both here and at Orleans—They are Considered as young men without Experience in State affairs, & therefore However well meaning have not had the good fortune to Please the People, but as I do not Concern in Politics here I only mention this to you—I leave the Government to proceed in its own way, but such mistakes fall at the door of the President which I am sorry for, as no doubt they Come through the hands of the speculative band that surrounds him and I fear in the End will render his reign unpopular—Certain it is, he is some how or other often mislead.

The mildness with which he wishes to govern invites Imposition, Mildness and Energy should alway go hand in hand in governing.—The vavering Variety of Sentiment that has ruled Congress results in applying 2 millions to Purchase the Floridas and in a fruitless attempt to check the Maritime Conduct of G. Brittain.

It will cease of Course with the war, but while her Existence is threatened by Bonaparte Nothing we can do will prevent her guarding that by everything she can do to Injure & Enfeble France—Never the less a strong Remonstrance ag^t. her Conduct and Demand of Satisfaction would have been right; but shall we Cut down our fruit tree because she Picks a few Pairs from it to prevent her doing the like again Such Police is not the best—Randolphs Jud^t. was better his Integrity and Independence of Spirit almost direct him as wisdom w^d. do, with respect to him I am only sorry that he diviates in some degree from that Decorous guard which Every person ought to have over their Conduct & language in Congress for whatever Excuse may be given for Indecorous personal Invective the Dignity of the Nation requires that on that Floor they should always be guarded with that Decent Chastness of Expression which is not invidious however severe—Satire or Censure in a place like that should always be chaste and without a Shade of Scurrility—Overlooking this Shade his speeches are admirable and not only tend to wisdom but to check that host of speculation which threatens ruin to the Country by Subverting its Patriotism and Virtue.

The People of this Territory are greatly Mortified at the Little attention Congress has paid to their Memorial & Representations. Certainly this Territory is the only Post in the western Country which could make an effective Stand against an Invading powerful Enemy and therefore deserves for their own sakes the utmost Care and attention of the United States. It is formidable by its Situation and Seite being a hilly broken Country, and is Respectable by Encluding a great number of old Experienced officers, unnoticed however by our Government while mere Children from abroad are sent to rule over them. but Enough of Politics—Give my love to Susan & the children Adieu—

Thomas Rodney.

N. B. do not forgit to attend To Col. Ellis's Coach—and Let it be of the best Materials and as Elegant and Fashionable as it can be made.

I see by a bill which has passed the House of Representatives that they mean to give us nothing for our Services at the Board during the Months of December, January, February & March last past—can they suppose we live here without Expense? as well as work for Nothing? has this any Example Elsewhere?

Thomas Rodney to Cæsar A. Rodney.

Town of Washington M. T. July 14th. 1806.

My dear Son,

Being at Natchez a few days ago I heard there was a Boat Load of large bones at the River & went Down to View them—They were packed up in a number of boxes, and when Examined I found they belonged to different animals, but most of them to the Elephant or Wild Boar but he had no grinders of the Elephant Kind so large as some I had seen before—but the jaw or grinding teeth of the wild Boar were rather larger than those I had seen before which I formerly described to you; he had also a tusk which it is said when Intire was sixteen feet long & weighed 150^{lbs} but altho this was a foot longer than the one found at the highland Creek it Did not weigh so much for that weighed 172^w. Yet in all probability this was the fellow to that and belonged to the same Creature, for this was thicker as well as longer but in part was more decayed which made it lighter—The bones of these two Kinds of animals are Easily distinguishable by their nature and Size but he had horns of some Kinds of animals not hitherto mention^d. by any Naturalist—They seem to have been of the Cow or Bufflo Kind—Some of those horns were five or six feet long others shorter, and some of the shorter ones were very strong and Flattish one way all the Rest were round like Cow horns and formed

differently in the bend of them seeming to vary in that respect as the Horns of Cows do—They were Evidently not Buffalo horns because they are all short and stubbed, whereas these of one Kind were very long in proportion to their thickness Still however no Idea can be formed of the Size of the Creature by the horns as some Small Cows have very long horns—However my Idea of them is that the Creature was large & that it probably was the Face of one of those animals I saw at the big borne lick which measured three feet four Inches a Cross the forehead—He said he had the head of one of the large Animals Complete but It was late and I had not time to view it—He said also that the bones of the largest animals he had when put together would make a skelleton sixty feet long & thirty feet high but I saw no specimens that bespoke that size—He said also that this larger Animal was Carnivorous & undertook to shew one of his Monstrous Claws but the bones he produced as Such Evidently belonged to the foot of the wild Boar which I believe was the largest animal of this Country—and the Hog Kind Indeed are Calculated by Nature to sustain a larger bulk than any other animal in a Northern Hemisphere because all things are food for them. Animals and Vegetables Roots and Nuts &c—The Man who has Collected these bones seems well Suted to such business but not so well to judge of them for he seems to have wild and novel Notions about them—They are however great Curiosities—and serve to shew that many Kinds of animals that have Existed in the World have Perished & Especially of the larger Kinds—This has been the Case with the Giants also among men—They have become Extinct—However I am inclined to believe that the Calamity which swept off all the larger animals of this Country also swept off many smaller kinds and also the Aboriginies or first race of men in our Northern Hemisphere, for the mounds we find in the western Country

Evidently belonged to them as none of the Indian tribes bury their dead in that way—Apropos, a few days ago two Indians were Killed near Natchez they Frequent that City to sell their Peltry & git Whisky—two of them had quarreled and fought some time ago & one of them had one of his fingers bit so bad that it gave him great pain & he could not Cure it so that he was disabled from being a Warrior—and when they met again he told the other who had bit him that as he had begun to Kill him he must Kill him quite—the other reluctantly agreed to do it and they met by agreement in Col. Geraults Lane—The one who was to die went unarmed and had his wife and son with him who Endeavoured to prevail on him not to die, but he scouted them and said he must die—The other came into the lane meeting him with his rifle in his hand and a bottle of whisky—When they got near the one that was to die Presented his bosom; the other took a drink of whisky then Presented his Rifle and shot him through the breast—he died Instantly The other drank the rest of his Whisky then loaded his Rifle again and handed it to the son of the one he had Killed & then Presinted his own bosom to him and the son shot him dead—Then all the Indians Present buried them each near where he was Killed and then Cried over them. Thus it appears an Indian Warrior prefers death to living maimed.

Yours of the 2^d. of June Came to hand by the Last Mail—I am very glad to hear you are all well—People of Fortune are Flocking fast to this Country—but as Lands are selling Cheaper in the Floridas Many go there to Settle but in Expectation they will soon belong to America. Gov^r. Claiborne is to be married shortly to a Tuckapan girl of the Name of Duval, Daughter of a Frenchman—& she is said to be young and Very Hansom—Yet report says, he is gitting more & more unpopular there—perhaps an alliance with the French may make a Change—It is understood here that Judge

Provost has resigned and only Continues to Act till his Place Can be Supplied—No Judge has been sent here yet in the Room of Matthews who was removed to Orleans—and as Judge Bruin did not attend we had no Supreme Court—I continue in good health—Give my love to Susan & the Children.

God bless you all, adieu,
Thomas Rodney.

Thomas Rodney to Cæsar A. Rodney.

Town of Washington M. T. Aug^t. 25th 1806.

My dear Son,

As this is the only part of our Country where a rupture with any foreign Nation is likely to take place, I have heretofore from time to time given you information of such Circumstances as have Come to my Knowledge relative to the Conduct of the Spaniards and our Troops on the Frontier in the west—Since I wrote last, a Second Express it is said arrived at Fort Adams from Nachitouchez informing that the Spaniards had advanced within 20 miles of that post and that all the Troops at Fort Adams were Ordered to march to the assistance of the Nachitouchez Garrison which Expected to be attacked before they could arrive there—The Att^y. Gen^l. who returned from an Orphan's Court held last week at the hights, Confirms this account and says that all the Troops were to leave the hights the day before yesterday—but undoubtedly some must be left to take care of three thousand stand of small arms & 20 or 30 pieces of Cannon said to be there—Govern. will no doubt receive more Correct accounts of these Movements from the officers by this Mail—Gen^l. Wilkinson has not Come down yet—Col. Cushing who is said to be a good officer, Commands at Nachitouch—but his whole force after being joined by those from Fort Adams Will probably not Exceed 6 or 7 hundred men & the Spaniards are said to have Nine hundred

Horse and 2000, Infantry—to wit 200, Horse in pursuit of Sparkes & Freeman, and 700 approaching Nachitoush and two thousand Infantry near the Sabine River—Of Course if these accounts are true and they are determined to retake the Country it would seem that our Regular Force can hardly prevent it without uncommon Exertion & Enterprize and it is said not much Aid can be Expected from the Orleans Territory Militia—The Militia here are preparing to be ready to turn out but the Governors of this and the Orleans Territory are inexperienced in Military affairs—and under such the military are not apt to act with Confidence and Spirit & This Territory Contains five Militia Regiments, they are all Commanded now by Col. Ozmun the Eldest Col.—by the Number of Regiments there ought to be two Brigadier Generals and a Major General—These are in the appointment of the President, and Indeed ought to have been appointed long ago—Each County forms a Regiment—Col. Ozmun being put in Command and Residing in Adams and also living an old Revolutionary officer ought to be first Brigadier—and Major Wooldridge of Claiborne County being the only officer of Military Experience in the two uper Counties, might answer for second Brigadier—tho Major F. L. Claiborn of this (Adams) County if he lived in that district perhaps ought to be preferred and If the Government thought proper I would accept the [torn] of Major General, and this I believe not an officer or Soldier in this Territory would object to but they would rather rejoice in such an appointment most of them having Expressed their Wishes if there should be a war here that I may Command them—Yet I am not fond of Commanding Militia in actual Service and [if] we should have a war would prefer being in the Regular army—but shall not solicit one or the other.

Thomas Rodney.

(To be continued.)